

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Lila Reiplinger, 63, hula dancer and musician

"We danced all the time. For every party. After the food was served, get the ukulele and the guitar, set up and dance. My aunts would get up and dance. Always . . ."

Reiplinger, part-Hawaiian, was born in Honolulu on October 28, 1923. She was the second daughter of Augustine and Amelia Guerrero. Reiplinger's mother was an entertainer and very active in women's social groups, primarily the Young Women's Christian Association. The family lived in Kaimukī until 1937.

Reiplinger attended Cummings School, Ali'iolani Elementary, Sacred Hearts Academy, and graduated from Punahou School.

At the young age of seven, Reiplinger began her entertaining career which took her to many Mainland cities. She danced in Waikīkī at the Halekūlani, Royal Hawaiian, and Moana Hotels. She was an original member of the Royal Hawaiian Girls' Glee Club and the Honolulu Girls' Glee Club. In 1936 Reiplinger opened with the Kodak Hula Show. She also entertained with Al Perry on "Hawai'i Calls."

The Guerrero family moved to Waikīkī in 1937 when they built their home on Kānekapōlei Lane. Although Reiplinger lived there only until 1943 when she married Frank Reiplinger, her mother stayed until 1969 and Reiplinger visited often. She has fond memories of her teen-age years in Waikīkī.

Reiplinger did less entertaining while raising her three children, devoting most of her time to them. In recent years she has performed with a family trio including sister, Marion, and nephew, Van Diamond. She also works with the Kupuna Project in the public schools, teaching Hawaiiana to young children.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Lila Reiplinger (LR)

May 19, 1986

Kāhala, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Lila Reiplinger at her home in Kāhala, O'ahu, Hawai'i on May 19, 1986. The interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay. Now, first we'll start off by talking about your parents. Maybe your father first. What was his name?

LR: Augustine M. Guerrero.

IH: And what was his occupation?

LR: He was with the Board of Water Supply in the rural waterworks of the city and county when he passed away in 1939.

IH: Was he born and raised here?

LR: Yes, he was, mm hmm. He was also an avid tennis player, wrote for the [Honolulu] Advertiser, and did items with (Leonard) "Red" McQueen who passed away recently. Also, Andy Mitsukado, who I believe is still around, I'm not sure. He really enjoyed his tennis playing and organizing the youngsters. Took them to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to do competition work there with the tennis players.

IH: Oh, was that with Park and Recreation?

LR: With the Beretania Tennis Courts and Kapi'olani Tennis Court. Clubs, rather. I believe one of his former players happens to be Henry Kamakana, Sr. He also had Chin Sunn, Bo Ming Yee. I think there was one fellow named (Bert) Loughmiller. Those four went away with him.

IH: Okay. You said your father passed away in 1939?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: So you were still young then, huh?

LR: Yes, I was still in high school. I was a sophomore.

IH: Okay. How about your mother?

LR: My mother, Amelia Akeo Guerrero was a recreation director with the city and county. She's a grand organizer. Worked with the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] in Honolulu. Started the Royal Hawaiian Girls' Glee Club with her sister Louise Akeo. Then later---oh, just a minute. Let me go back. Starting, recruiting ladies to sing at the YWCA as a Hawaiian Girls' Club before the Royal Hawaiian [Girls' Glee Club]. And then, she organized her own a few years later called the Honolulu Girls' [Glee Club]. That was way back in the early '30s. Until she passed away. We carried on, on a smaller scale along the '60s, and '70s, and '80s with my sister Marion [Diamond], her son Van, and myself. And played at the Halekulani until it closed, I believe, in in first part of the '80s.

IH: Okay, when she first organized that girls' club with the YWCA, were there other girls' clubs in town, singing clubs?

LR: Oh, there might have been, but I don't remember that much. But she organized the group, friends of hers, friends of my aunt's. And they also were very sports-minded. They played basketball. From there, they started this singing group.

IH: Where did they go out to sing?

LR: Oh, they started at KGU, "Von Hamm-Young Hour." And Mrs. [Charles] Montague Cooke's home in Manoa. Mrs. Clifford Kimball, then the owner of the Halekulani Hotel with her husband. And that's where our base was, the Halekulani Hotel. We performed there at least twice a week.

IH: How old were you when you started singing with them?

LR: About nine. But then I also danced when I was seven with my aunt.

IH: Louise Akeo?

LR: Louise Akeo, uh huh, at the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel]. Just going along with the older girls. Then continuing on until right now. I'm still doing it. Right now, I'm teaching and singing. I let the youngsters do the dancing.

(Laughter)

IH: Okay. When you folks first started at the Halekulani singing, do you remember what the place was like?

LR: Oh, yes. It consisted of the House without a Key, the main building. Well, first of all, they had done away with the old building that was existing at the time my mother started. Then

they put the new dining room and the office building which I believe still stands today. And they had a lovely garden, and then they added more cottages. The beach was small, but very peaceful, very nice. They also took over the old Gray's [By-the-Sea] beach cottages and the area in front of the complex.

IH: What kind of customers did they service?

LR: Oh, I would say, prominent people from the Mainland, in fact all over the world. Next to the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel], they were the only ones, I believe, that existed on the beach front. And the Moana [Hotel].

IH: Was it crowded? Or did they have seasons or . . .

LR: Yes. Well, of course, the visitors came by ships. They had people that spent months at a time there. Some stayed throughout the years.

IH: Oh, they lived there?

LR: Oh, yes. Up until the latter part of, I believe, the '60s, when they moved out to their own homes. But there were many that lived there throughout the year.

IH: And Mrs. Kimball sang with you folks?

LR: Oh, no. She and Mrs. Cooke were affiliated with the YWCA. But my mother's group would do the entertaining for their guests. But when they were at the [YWCA's] Hawaiian Club, the two ladies would join the girls and sing with them. And many other people that were affiliated with the YWCA. I would say, Dr. Hodgins' wife, Mrs. Swanzy, they all belonged.

IH: So they did sing with your . . .

LR: Oh, yes, with the Hawaiian Girls' Club. There were many others, but it's been a long time.

(Laughter)

IH: Okay. And at that time, you were living in Kaimukī?

LR: Kaimukī, mm hmm [yes].

IH: What was that like in Kaimukī?

LR: Kaimukī? As I remember it, we lived on 15th Avenue. The homes were quite new at the time. That was a new area. People from Downtown Honolulu seemed to enjoy the warmth of Kaimukī. And our childhood--my childhood, my sister's, my cousins'--we all lived in maybe two blocks. All lived in sort of like a complex, I would say. We had an aunt down the street, one more up on the other

corner, one next door. In fact, the Kamakas lived right next door to us. That's Sam and Fred Kamaka of Kamaka Ukulele.

IH: And that's your family?

LR: Mm hmm, oh, yes. We lived right next door. We all played together and had lots of fun. Another uncle lived a block away. He was Manuel Akeo and his family. And Louise [Akeo] lived at the corner.

(Laughter)

LR: So we were right there. We didn't have to go far to find playmates.

IH: Is that where you started dancing? When you were living in Kaimuki?

LR: Yes, I started dancing there.

IH: Did you learn from your Aunt Louise?

LR: Well, actually, my Aunt Louise used to hold classes for her members of the Royal Hawaiian Girls' Glee Club. They were taking hula at the time from what we call a kumu hula or master, Kekaha Ross. So there was a plumeria tree outside of her window, her living room window. So I used to climb up there, peek in, (chuckles) watch the ladies dance, and then go home and practice myself. Until they found out I was sitting up on the tree every afternoon. (Laughs) Well, they didn't allow me to go in with them. But the hula master said, "Now, this little girl needs to go to someone to train her. She's a natural." So I was sent to 'Iolani Luahine's aunt, Mrs. Sylvester. Keahi. In fact, 'Iolani called her her mother. She was sort of hanaied by Mrs. Sylvester. And then, from her to Hana En Sui Pung who was another teacher of mine. Kanahēles. (David) "Daddy" Bray. Oh, there were so many. I can't recall some of their names. They have passed away. But Joseph Ilala'ole.

IH: So why did you go to so many different hula instructors?

LR: Well, every hula instructor had their own style. Some of them taught chants that came from their family. Others taught from other sources. So I did take many of the kahiko, they call it today. We called it 'ōlapa. And then, the old temple dances, the pahu hula. Before we started to do what we call the hula ku'i, today it's called 'auana.

IH: So when you took the 'ōlapa, you had learned different . . .

LR: Different styles, different interpretation. Each island had their own style and interpretation of chant. It was very interesting to me.

IH: So that's why you took from all these different instructors?

LR: Mm hmm. I was told to do that.

IH: Well, it's different than today, then? Today, they just take from one instructor.

LR: One, yes. They've learned from, say, their own kumu hula who they've chosen themselves. Where I was told for maybe a dance, "Pele," should be learned by, maybe, teacher A. And then, certain ma'i hula, from an instructor that specialized in that. The ma'i hulas were not to be shown out in public. It was personal. It was written for our kings and queens or some personality.

IH: So if you learned it, when could you dance it?

LR: Only when, maybe, somebody called for it. You know, if we went to a family of the 'ohana of the ali'i, they might want to see if we know how to dance or present it to them.

IH: So you folks never danced it out in Waikīkī?

LR: We never danced it in. . . . No. No. I never did. To us, it was sacrilege to have other people see what was written for a personality.

IH: Yeah, but that has changed today, too.

LR: It has changed, yes. If our kumu hula said it's allowed, fine. It was allowed. But if not, well, forget about it. Although we've not forgotten it in our minds. We still have it there. But today, we sort of shy away from it.

IH: So when you went to dance publicly in hotels . . .

LR: We danced what was allowed.

IH: So you knew the difference for yourself then?

LR: Yes, mm hmm. We did common dances for the visitors that were well known. But personal things were not put out for the eyes of the public.

IH: When you started dancing for the public in Waikīkī, did you folks already know the hapa-Haole type of hulas or did that increase . . .

LR: Uh huh, yes, it came to us very early. In the '30s we were beginning to do "My Little Grass Shack," or "What Am I Going to Do for My Red 'Ōpū."

(Laughter)

LR: All those funny little dances. And then, they came more frequently. They had people that came to visit, wanted to write a

song about what they saw. It was fine, hapa-Haole tunes. They understood it. But for the Hawaiian people, we had many composers. They wrote their own choices, such as [songs about] a beautiful place. We have so many composers that write such beautiful songs. And they're in Hawaiian, so we interpret to our best knowledge with the help of our kupuna.

IH: Okay. Now, if we can get back to Kaimukī for a minute. You started school when you were still living in Kaimukī?

LR: Yes. I started at Cummins School which is now called Liholiho [Elementary]. It's between 7th and 8th Avenues.

IH: Oh, uh huh. And that was Cummins School before?

LR: It was named, yes, Cummins School. Then they changed it to Liholiho. I don't know when. I've forgotten. I had then moved to Ali'iōlani in my fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. I was at Ali'iōlani.

IH: Did those schools just service the Kaimukī area?

LR: Well, we had Lili'uokalani which serviced, I believe, at the time, seventh and eighth grade. So we all had to go down to either Wai'alae. . . . No, wait a minute. I'm not sure whether Wai'alae [Elementary] was there, yet. At one time they had that English-speaking schools. You know, English standard and then the regular. So, we were moved to Ali'iōlani [Elementary]. From Ali'iōlani, I went to Sacred Hearts Academy, seventh, eighth grade, then from there I went to Punahou and graduated from there.

IH: At the time you were going to Punahou . . .

LR: We moved to Waikīkī.

IH: That's when you were living in Waikīkī?

LR: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: How did you get to go to Punahou?

LR: Well, through the efforts of Mrs. [Charles] Montague Cooke, who I happen to be named after. She thought that it would be nice for me to have an education at the old school of Punahou. And so, she asked my mother and father if they would consider letting me go there. So that's how I ended up there.

IH: Were there a lot of Hawaiian students who were at Punahou at that time

LR: Oh, yes. We had. We did, mm hmm [yes], quite a few. Had a good friend Ka'iulani Boyd Matson, who has just passed away. But she comes from the Cleghorn family. We had . . .

IH: Was she living in Waikīkī, also?

LR: She was living on Kalākaua Avenue near the old taro patches.

IH: Which was where . . .

LR: All right. Right now, it's where the Makua Ali'i Home is in. . . .
What's that? Kalākaua?

IH: Kalākaua.

LR: Housing area? Not the one up in Kalihi. I believe they call it . . .

IH: It's on Kalākaua [Avenue] and King [Street].

LR: Kalākaua and King.

IH: Oh, so that's where she lived?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. In the old family property back there.

IH: And those used to be taro patches, you said?

LR: Taro patches, and the Cleghorn and Boyd property.

IH: Do you remember when it was taro patches?

LR: Oh, yeah. When I was a child about seven, eight years old, my mother used to go down there and buy taro and lū'au leaves and quite a few. All the way out into the area where Holiday Mart sits was all taro patches. It's interesting.

IH: Yeah. At that same time, were there still farms in Waikīkī? Do you remember . . .

LR: Way back in '37, '38, they had a few around Kapahulu out by where the [Ala Wai] Golf Course is now.

IH: Oh, so they still had farms in there that late?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. Then they sort of disappeared.

IH: Oh, that's interesting. Okay, so were there any other kids in your neighborhood of Waikīkī that went to Punahou?

LR: Oh, yes. Let me see. The next block over towards Diamond Head would be Olmos family.

IH: That was on Prince Edward [Street]?

LR: Pat Olmos went to Punahou. And we had Sammy Amalu. He was at Punahou. He lived at Kūhio [Avenue] and Lili'uokalani [Avenue], I

think. I still remember their house. And then, let me see, the Petersons. The Peterson family, their children went to Punahou, too. Let me see, going the other way towards town, Alice Call, who was the daughter of Raymond and Alice Call. Let's see, Dorothy Devoy. Her dad worked for the Seaside Company which was affiliated with the Matson Navigation. Let's see. That's all I can recall right now. Of course, Marjorie Carter's sister, Billie, went to Punahou. She was there. Did she tell you about . . .

IH: She was the younger sister?

LR: Yeah, uh huh. She was there. So we all caught the same bus to go to school. That was after we had the streetcars.

IH: When did the buses start running?

LR: I believe in '38, '39. It's the trolley. Trolley buses. Then the gas buses later on.

IH: Where did you folks catch the bus?

LR: On Kalākaua Avenue. Right across the Moana Hotel.

IH: What time in the morning did you go?

LR: Oh, we left home about quarter to seven.

IH: And you folks all gathered at . . .

LR: At the corner.

IH: Right there.

LR: Just walked up. Everybody gathered at different corners and the bus stopped for us. Then we made a transfer up at. . . . Let's see, was it King [Street]? And then took another bus going up to Manoa, one of the small buses.

IH: Did school last all day?

LR: Oh, yes. We started at five minutes of eight [a.m.] and we were out at 2:30 [p.m.].

IH: Oh, so it was about the same as it is now, then?

LR: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

IH: Did you folks have activities after school?

LR: Oh, yes. We had sports activities. Baseball, volleyball, basketball, field hockey for the girls. The boys had their own area on the upper field.

IH: Were you involved in those?

LR: Oh, yes. Mm hmm, every sport you could think of.

IH: When did you have time to practice hula?

LR: Later, after four o'clock. We practiced hula until five, six, sometimes. Go home and do your homework, if we didn't finish in the study hall.

IH: What year did you folks move to Waikīkī?

LR: Nineteen thirty-seven.

IH: And why did you folks move down there?

LR: Well, my brother-in-law [David Diamond] decided, oh, he bought a place down in Waikīkī . . .

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

IH: Okay. So.

LR: We were at. . . .

IH: Why you moved to Waikīkī.

LR: Okay. Well, we thought it'd be nice to move to that area. Was going to build a new house. So it would be different, nice; get near the beach.

IH: Did you folks buy the property?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: So it was affordable at the time?

LR: Yes it was. Those times, yes. (Laughs) We were fortunate. They had filled in all the swamp area and built the canal. They put roads in. Of course, these were dead-end streets. From Ka'iulani [Avenue] to Royal Hawaiian Avenue. And then, Lewers [Street]. Those were the only through streets then. No, Seaside, excuse me. The next street through pass Ka'iulani would be Seaside. And then, Lewers. So that's the long stretch. In between, they're all dead-end.

IH: Those were built after the Ala Wai was put in?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. Mm hmm, mm hmm. And let me see, Marjorie Carter lived. . . . They built theirs after we were there a few years. They had a huge home [on Ala Wai Boulevard].

(Laughter)

LR: Yes.

IH: Do you remember how much your father paid for that property?

LR: Let me see. The house, I remember, was about little over \$4,000. And the property, I believe, about \$500.

IH: How big was the property?

LR: Well, was an odd-shaped lot. It looked sort of like a triangle. See, it went down like this. It was a triangle.

IH: You don't know the . . .

LR: I don't know the dimensions right now. The front was small and it went out towards the back.

IH: Compared to today's house lots, was it big like this lot here? Was it bigger than this lot?

LR: Little smaller [about 6,000 square feet] 'cause it had the fence that came out on a triangle, to make that triangle. But it was a very big house. We had four bedrooms, two baths, a little, sort of a small room in back down towards the garage. A huge kitchen, and very large living room and dining room.

IH: And was two stories . . .

LR: Two stories, mm hmm [yes], and a lanai.

IH: Were there other two-stories in Waikīkī at that time?

LR: A couple of years later there was one right next door to us on our street. Belonged to Frank Cummings and his wife. Across the street they had one that was converted into apartment. And then, little cottages across, directly across. At the corner they had two one-story dwellings. There were quite a few two-story homes. But at one time, most of these sprawling low homes [were built] to go along to, I guess, enhance the area. It's very nice.

IH: What kind of greeneries did you have around your house?

LR: Well, we had Hawaiian plants my mother was always with. Had to have plumeria trees, couple of those. We had a large hau tree which was on the property. We sort of built around, planted anthuriums around. And pikakes, 'ilima. My mother had to have all her Hawaiian plants.

IH: That's nice.

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. Ti leaves along the fence. The same fence that blocks off the Seaside property next. Remember I told (chuckles) you?

IH: Yeah. Can you tell us what was on the other side of the fence that you're talking about?

LR: Well, it belonged to Seaside Company which housed the employees of the Moana and Royal Hawaiian Hotels. They sort of had their own little village back there.

IH: What kind of things were in there?

LR: They had bachelors' quarters for the men that were unmarried. They had cottages for the married couples with families. And let me see, they had a laundry, barbershop, pool hall, their own baseball field, and greenhouse that belonged to the hotels for their plants. They had a power plant that took care of the two hotels and cottages. What else did they have? Oh, playing field . . .

IH: What two hotels are those, you're talking about?

LR: The Moana and the Royal Hawaiian. Those were the two big hotels on the beach.

IH: And so, the employee cottages housed employees from both hotels?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], both hotels.

IH: How big an area did that cover?

LR: Oh, quite a few acres. I didn't really. . . . Let's see, one, two, three, about four blocks.

IH: Oh. So that would be right there around Kūhiō?

LR: Kūhiō Avenue, mm hmm [yes], and below. Kūhiō would be running in the same direction as Ala Wai [Boulevard]. Diamond Head, 'Ewa. Going this way.

IH: Oh, so, after Kūhiō ended.

LR: Okay, then you come down for maybe half a block [towards the Ala Wai Canal]. And then, you have these dead-end streets. But Kūhiō did not run through until later, in the '50s. Late '50s. Before they ran Kūhiō through to meet the other end of Ka'iulani. So, you know where Kūhiō is now?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

LR: Well, you know where Ka'iulani Avenue is. Well, it was all blocked off there. It was all fenced in.

IH: Oh, from Ka'iulani to your street?

LR: No, from Ka'iulani all the way down to Seaside [Avenue].

IH: Oh, all of that was . . .

LR: That belonged to the hotel.

IH: Oh, that's pretty big.

LR: Oh, you see, they had a big baseball field, the greenhouse, and then Seaside [Avenue] was the beginning of the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] entrance. That's quite a big area, you see.

IH: So they leased all of that area?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. And then, the front area, from Seaside back a block or two [towards Diamond Head], would be, at the time, the Waikiki Theater. And then, some shops, and then the Seaside cottages, and curio shops. And then Ka'iulani [Avenue] . . .

IH: So, were the employees' cottages all on the Ala Wai side of Kūhiō [Avenue], would you say? Or would it be on both sides of Kūhiō?

LR: All right. Should I say I'm leaving the Moana Hotel. I just got off the bus coming home from school. So there was a lane that was open fronting Kalakaua [across from Moana Hotel]. So we'd walk there, past the power plant, walk right through towards the Ala Wai. Then we'd start into the baseball field, and then you see all these big banyan trees. To the right were the cottages for the married couples and their families. Then we'd turn to the right and come to. . . . They had the bachelors' quarters for the men. And then, there's a gate that went through to Kānekapōlei [Place]. So we just opened the gate and we were home.

IH: When you moved onto that property, was that street already named?

LR: No, it wasn't. My father and my brother-in-law submitted my sister's name because she had a name that would be quite--well, was well known as Kānekapōlei. So they did submit her name, I believe, to the Board of Supervisors or wherever it went through. They accepted it and it became Kānekapōlei. It had no name at the time.

IH: How is that name famous?

LR: Well, being that she was one of the wives of Kamehameha.

IH: Do you know the meaning of Kānekapōlei?

LR: Well, there is a meaning, but in this case, I think they have dual meanings. It says "the father, the mother, and the child." Kāne, "the father;" kapō, "the mother;" and lei is "the child."

IH: Oh, how nice. That's nice. So, all of those dead-end streets, originally when people were first moving onto the streets, they were unnamed?

LR: All unnamed.

IH: So what did you give as your address?

LR: Four five one Kānekapōlei.

IH: Before it was named?

LR: The house wasn't finished yet.

IH: Oh, I see. Okay.

LR: I think it's in the book of places and. . . .

IH: Place names? Place Names of Hawai'i?

LR: Of Hawai'i, yes. And it tells about the name after Marion Diamond. Because all of the streets were named after ali'i. Like Lili'uokalani. Paoakalani was a home of Lili'uokalani, her Waikīkī home. I think you know that when she wrote a song. And while she was in prison in the ['Iolani] Palace, her handmaidens used to bring her flowers from her place. They used to wrap it up in newspaper. That's the only way she got news from the outside world. They brought flowers wrapped in the newspaper and she just loved the flowers, of course, but then she had something to read. That's part of the story. (Chuckles) And then, we had, let's see, other names. Of course, Kalākaua was named earlier. And Lili'uokalani, Paoakalani. Of course, we had Pualeilani. And oh, so many.

Oh, yes, another family that also went to Punahou, one of the boys, was Mossman from Lalani Village down at the end of Kalākaua [Avenue]. Across the zoo was this little area and they had a Hawaiian village called Lalani [Hawaiian] Village. I believe his name was Joseph. And his father and mother ran this little Hawaiian Village. He had (three) sisters. One was also our Matson girl earlier. Was Pualani Mossman. She now lives on the East Coast. Another sister, Piilani, and one more, Leilani.

IH: Oh, there were three sisters?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. And then, the young boy went to Punahou School. These things come back to me as I'm talking, you know. And then, oh, yes, down the street on 'Ōhū Avenue, Harold Chung Hoon was at Punahou, too. Of course, his mother was also with my mother in YWCA and sports. His brother Gordon Chung Hoon, I think he went to Punahou also. I'm not sure, but I know Harold did. He lives out at your way [i.e., Wai'anae]. There is a ranch out there. Oh, my. He and his wife Betty. Now, he was there at Punahou. See, you have to get all these things that come back. (Laughs)

IH: What about the Lalani Village. What was it used for?

LR: Well, it was more like, did you hear about our Ulu Mau Village at one time that we had here? Well, it was similar. He wanted to have his family show our culture. His name was George, George Mossman. He and his wife had this very lovely place. They used to have luaus. His children would perform. He would have people that would prepare food and introduce it to the visitors.

IH: So, was visitor-oriented?

LR: Uh huh [Yes], for a short while. I mean, you know, when the war came on, everything stopped. Then, of course, the girls had moved to the Mainland and they danced over there. In fact, one of the girls danced with us in New York. So was interesting to see them. They wanted to leave. They wanted to see what was on the other side of the ocean. Our Hawaiian people traveled a lot. I think since the migration, it's in their blood to see--they're adventurous. They want to see. Right?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IH: Okay, so the Lalani Village had, you said, grass shacks?

LR: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: Did they live in those shacks or was it just for show?

LR: Well, they did have a house in the back, but they'd walk around, you know, with malos on and . . .

IH: Oh, they did?

LR: Yeah. It was interesting for us, too. That's where I first saw their son do the pig dance, the pa'i umauma. Because I didn't learn that until later. Of course, I saw him doing this pig dance. It was quite interesting. I stood there watching him, and I said, "Hey, he goes to Punahou. He's doing all right. He's doing something."

(Laughter)

IH: It's interesting that he grew up in that environment and they sent him to Punahou.

LR: Well, you know, another person that grew up in that kind of environment was David [Kaapu] from down at Punalu'u. He lived in the grass shack. His son went to, what? Annapolis, West Point? Annapolis, I think it was. He, too, learned his roots early. They

were trying to bring it back early in the '30s. Surprising, huh? So, I remember that.

IH: Okay. You mentioned Frank Cummings as one of your neighbors. What do you remember about that family?

LR: Well, that family, he was the manager of Palama Theater for Consolidated [Amusement Company]. He had two children, a girl and a boy. His wife, after he passed away, went into real estate. She comes from a known family, the Seaburys. They're both Island people. We played with them. Oh, yes, they went to Punahou School, too, after a while. Then there was another young boy that lived around the corner from us, Jack Oberholtzer. He came from Germany to come and live with his father who was the baggage master at the Moana Hotel. He lived on the Ala Wai [Boulevard] between Ka'iulani [Avenue] and Kānekapōlei [Place]. He could not speak a word of English. But by the time the year was over, he was doing so well. And he, too, graduated from Punahou School. So that's another one. I believe he was with the Hawaiian Electric [Company]. He's younger than I am, but. . . . Those are the people. Now, that would be good to find out. How he saw Hawai'i for the first time, you know. He might not remember me because they later moved. His dad died, and he moved off. I think he got married. He went to college and got married. But when he first came there, I remember him.

(Laughter)

LR: I know, of course, his father was such a good man. But see, most of those people were working at the hotels and they lived in the area. Those that could manage it, let's say that.

IH: Okay. And who were your other neighbors on Kānekapōlei?

LR: Well, that's it. In later years, we had Lei Becker. They lived at the corner house. Lei Becker is Winona Beamer's cousin. [Winona Beamer is a well-known Hawaiian entertainer.]

IH: And was your house at the end of the road?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. Right by the fence.

IH: Right. Okay. So, was just your house and Cummings . . .

LR: Yeah, Cummings and where Lei Becker lived. Also, we had a Fuller brush man, Mr. Pratt.

IH: He sold Fuller brushes?

LR: I think it's Fuller brush.

IH: So there were only four house lots on one side?

LR: Three. One (our house), Cummings, and then where Lei stayed at the front house. Across the street from us were the Burnetts. They had a two-story house which they later converted into an apartment. Two, one upstairs; one, below. Across the street, you had apartments, well, low cottages, owned by--that's where "Turkey" [Love] lived over there, too, at one time--by the Schofields. They owned that area to the canal. So they had transients in there. Like maybe a year or two or sometimes more.

IH: Now, you mentioned that you had started working at the--well, dancing at the Moana [Hotel] at a young age.

LR: Yeah, I was . . .

IH: Then Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] at a young age. So when you were living in Waikiki, you were still dancing over there?

LR: Uh huh [Yes]. I was dancing at the Halekūlani [Hotel]. And then, that was in '38, '39, '40, I was dancing as a soloist same time with Aggie Auld, Mapuana Mossman Bishaw. She just passed away. That's Sterling's sister, Sterling Mossman's sister. "Tootsie" [Notley Steer] was dancing. Let's see, who else? Clara Inter. 'Iolani Luahine. We all had different nights to dance.

IH: And that was at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel . . .

LR: At the Royal, mm hmm [yes].

IH: Where was the nightclub at that time?

LR: Okay, it was outdoors. It was a big dance floor outside.

IH: Was that on the . . .

LR: Ocean side.

IH: Oh, on the ocean side?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], ocean side. And then, the dining room area was, let's see, just where the Monarch Room starts now, enclosed. Let's see, the dining room faced the ocean. It was a different setup from the Monarch Room today. It was only after the renovation after the war in '47 that they opened the new Monarch Room. But the old dining room was on a smaller scale. But the dance floor was out in the front and we danced there. Orchestra was in the little shell.

IH: Oh, they had a stage out there?

LR: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: Is that the portable stage that goes back and forth?

- LR: Uh huh, yes. (Chuckles) Then later on, they made a bigger one with a bigger dance floor when they reopened the Royal.
- IH: Your performance, was that like a Polynesian show?
- LR: Yes. The band played for us. We had maybe three or four girls doing line dances. Then we did a solo hula. And we were off.
- IH: So, was that a performance with dinner like it is today?
- LR: Uh huh [Yes], but not on a big scale. Not a forty-five minute show. Twenty minutes at the most.
- IH: Oh, so you just went in and danced for a short time . . .
- LR: For a short time and was all pau. Nine-thirty, quarter to ten, or something like that.
- IH: Did you folks hang around?
- LR: No.
- IH: Or just went home?
- LR: Went home. Went home, finished our studying or whatever we were doing. There were some of us still in school. The older girls, well, they could do anything they wished.
- IH: Were they allowed to stay back and mingle with the customers?
- LR: Oh, if they had friends. Oh, yeah, you could. They weren't that strict about it. Lots of people had friends, you know, that would call them over and sit down and talk with them. You could do that.
- IH: At that time, were you dancing for your aunt?
- LR: No, I was dancing for myself. I mean, just the hotel would say, "Okay, it's your turn to dance tonight." We got paid from the hotel. Unless you were in a big group, maybe on a Sunday evening, where you serenaded with your group--they had one or two--then you go in along with the group.
- IH: Where did you serenade?
- LR: In the garden, and then around in the lower area of the hotel. It was very nice. Serenade to the people in their rooms.
- IH: Oh, yeah, that's nice.
- LR: Yeah, it's sort of close feeling you get. It's nice when somebody comes around and sings to you, and you're looking down at them, you know.

IH: So that was still in the boat days, yeah, when you first were dancing?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], mm hmm.

IH: So those customers were sort of like the same as Halekūlani?

LR: Oh, yes, yes, yes. They were good. They were people that were quite affluent, very wealthy people that came down then in those days. No package deals like we have today.

IH: What was the attitude of those people towards the local people?

LR: Oh, they were lovely. Of course, they were inquisitive like everybody else, but they didn't bother us. I mean, it wasn't like other places, we may go to visit and people say, "Oh, well, she's a dancer and she's a singer." No, they treated us very nicely. Well, most of them were so educated, and they had the money to travel and they came out here. The beach boys could tell you from those days. The old-timers. But most of them have gone. We did go onto foreign ships. Sometimes, we had German ships that would come in before the war. We'd go out there and greet them with leis. They were flabbergasted, you know.

IH: Did the hotel sponsor that?

LR: Let's see, when we first went out, the Chamber of Commerce. And then, later, when the ships came back after the war, the hotel sponsored their greeters. HVB [Hawai'i Visitors Bureau] did the rest for the visitors. Previous to the war, it was the Tourist Bureau, they called it, that helped greet the people.

I remember one instance. George Bernard Shaw came out here. You know who he is? The writer. My cousin Ululani Barrett gave him this pretty lei. And he took it off and threw it away 'cause he didn't want it. Soon as he did that--he had this long beard--she got hold of his beard and yanked it.

(Laughter)

LR: She said, "That's terrible!" And she just yanked his beard.

(Laughter)

LR: That came out in the newspapers. We got quite a laugh out of that.

(Laughter)

LR: She was insulted because he took her lei off that she had given him, you know. (Laughs) Eccentric man.

IH: That was probably a unique occurrence. Didn't most of the tourists love those leis?

LR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They used to tip us, you know. Oh, terrific. That's nice. Of course, leis, those days, what? Twenty-five cents for three or something like that. But they were beautiful leis. Plumeria, the marigold--'ōkoleoioi. Have you heard that? So pretty. So, anything else? I can go on forever, you know.

(Laughter)

IH: Oh, yes. Did you folks have much chance to play on the beach?

LR: Oh, yes.

IH: Seems that you were real busy. You were dancing and going to Punahou . . .

LR: Oh, that's all right. We had time. I remember they had the old tavern over there, Waikīkī Tavern. Everybody used to hold their--well, they'd put their surfboards there. So one day, my cousins decided, "Oh, let's go surfing."

I said, "Surfing? Do you know what kind of board my brother-in-law has?" The old-type board, real heavy. It took four of us to carry the (chuckles) board down from Kānekapōlei to the beach. Four of us. And put the board down in the water, went out. We used to go down right next to the Moana and tavern, and then just have a grand time in the sand. Playing and surfing. I don't surf anymore. That's long gone. But the kids have these very light boards that they ride now, huh? It was fun, but to carry the board home again, it was agony.

(Laughter)

LR: After getting tossed around in the waves, right? Oh, yeah, we used to have fun going out swimming.

IH: What was your impression of the beach boys when you were young?

LR: Oh, they were just like uncles to us. Oh, you know, they were older people. And they took care of all the kids that were down there, you know. Of course, everybody seemed to know everyone else. Everyone knew. They'd call us by name. "No, don't go on that side," you know. "Move over this way, you might get hit." I mean, they took care of all the kids that were out there. It was either visitors or just the local people. It wasn't crowded like it is today. So they knew all of us. It was fun. They'd bring their children down; we'd all play together. Yeah, we had a nice beach in front of the [Waikīkī] Tavern, and also, all along in front of the Moana [Hotel] and the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel]. We used to go back and forth. No problems.

IH: Did you folks ever do anything in the Ala Wai [Canal]? Fishing or anything?

LR: Oh, yeah. We used to go out crabbing. And then, they used to have the canoe races in there. Every year they'd have sculling. You know, rowing. And the canoe races, well, used to be out on the beach. They practiced at Ala Moana [Beach]. They used to practice in the Ala Wai [Canal]. They did a lot of rowing. And lot of fishermen used to sit out there all day, both sides of the canal, and fish. We used to sit on the wall, watch them. Look for the 'alamihi that's crawling around, catching 'em. (Chuckles) Taking 'em home. Yeah, we had lots of fun. We had lots to do. We'd walk down to the Kapi'olani Park. Of course, those days, too, they were just filling in some of the swamp areas, Kapahulu. And walk around and play in the lily ponds that they used to have there by the bandstand. At one time at the Ala Wai they had amusement park. Used to have fairs there.

IH: Oh, on the ma uka side?

LR: Ma uka side, uh huh [yes].

IH: Was that bridge still connected?

LR: The bridge was still there. The walkway?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

LR: Uh huh [Yes]. Used to be one across there (around Paoakalani Avenue), too. How'd you know about the bridge?

IH: Some other residents have talked about it, but I'm not really sure how late they kept it . . .

LR: Oh, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

IH: Do you know when they took that bridge down?

LR: No, I can't remember. All of a sudden, it was gone.

IH: Yeah, that's too bad.

LR: But it was something. It was real nice. We used to play on there. Maybe that's why they took it down. All the kids were playing on it. Oh, yeah. Well, let me see, what else did we have there?

IH: Did you folks ever walk down to the tank? Did you have swimming lessons at the tank . . .

LR: Oh, you mean, down at the Natatorium?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

LR: Oh, yeah. Oh, we used to go down there and swim sometimes.

IH: I know in later years, they would give all of the kids swimming

lessons in there.

LR: Yes, from the school.

IH: Did you folks do that, too?

LR: No, we didn't go there, uh uh.

IH: Maybe that started in later years.

LR: I think so. Then later on, they took 'em to Sans Souci Beach on the other side. It got too crowded. That's where we used to have the Kodak [Hula] Show, on Sans Souci, facing the mountains.

IH: Were you involved in that when it first started?

LR: Mm hmm, yes.

IH: How did that originate?

LR: Oh, well, my aunt, Miss [Louise] Akeo at the time, and Mr. Fritz Herman from Eastman Kodak said it would be nice to have a little show for the visitors so that they can take pictures. So they started on a small scale. That's where I started with her, I think, 1936? Going back there, '36, '37. I was---my last year at Sacred Hearts [Academy]. I danced there. My cousin Ululani Barrett, "Tootsie" Notley, let's see, Jenny Wood, Nora Auna--who's Mrs. White. Let me see, who else? Caroline Hubbell. I think there were six of us. That's when we started down at the Natatorium area. The coconut trees were, I think, no higher than that door (about eight feet). Now look at them today. Yeah. And we started . . .

IH: Was that a new park?

LR: No. Next to the Natatorium?

IH: Uh huh [Yes].

LR: Well, they had just planted those, you see, when, I think, they built the Natatorium in the '30s, right? Early '30s [actually 1927]? So we sort of grew up there. (Laughs)

IH: How long did you dance there?

LR: I danced there for a year or so. Then I told you I went to Punahou and I couldn't go back to dance during school time. It was ten o'clock in the morning.

IH: Oh, that's right.

LR: So, I couldn't continue doing that. Then I went back later in the '50s and stayed there for ten years. Then I left the show. And

then, my aunt needed me to help her in '74. I went back to help her again. Got things straightened out there, then left again in '75, '76.

IH: When you went back in the '50s, had it moved already?

LR: No, it was still there at the beach. And I love it at the beach. In the area of the new [Waikīkī] Shell, it's hot. You don't have that same feeling. You know, on the beach, you have the breeze blowing and you can see the ocean. Picture-wise taking, it was wonderful. So, I enjoyed what we did there, to begin with.

IH: Why did they move it to the Shell?

LR: I believe they said they needed the beach area for the people. See, it took from one side of the park to where the Kaimana Hotel is. That's quite a bit. You know, people want to take their families and the bleachers are there. Well, so the Board of Supervisors or whoever decided that they would move it to the new Shell on the other side. So. Then, they used to have Red Cross senior citizen's life-saving classes right in front of the beach. Now, when they're there, we have to keep chasing them away because their heads pop up and you can see them in the pictures, you know. So, it was beginning to get on their nerves and getting on Mr. Herman's nerves from Eastman. So, talking back and forth, they decided, well, maybe put them in another area and let the beach people have their functions. You know, like teaching. Which was the best beach for little children, best beaches for the elderly, too, and life-saving. So that's the reason.

IH: You said when you first started dancing you danced for a year? But it was in the mornings. Weren't you still in high school?

LR: I was in the eighth grade, Sacred Hearts Academy.

IH: How were you able to go?

LR: The sisters let us go out.

IH: They would just let you out of school?

LR: Let us out for the morning, then we'll go back when we finish.

IH: How did you make up your work?

LR: Oh, the sisters made sure we made up our work somehow. See, we were Catholic girls, too. So, you know, they knew how to (laughs) talk to them, huh? The nuns. And they were so strict, too, right? The Sacred Hearts nuns.

IH: Yeah, I'm surprised they let you out. So, if you were a Catholic, then when you were living Waikīkī, did you attend St. Augustine [Church]?

LR: St. Augustine's, yes. I remembered it when it had the latticework. I was married in that church. In the old church. Open-air. Just had latticework, you know, on the sides. No windows.

IH: It didn't have any permanent walls?

LR: Oh, we had the permanent walls on the lower, but we had lattice going one way but no windows. We had the front door, that was it. Everything's all latticework right across. It was a unique one, you know.

IH: In those days, did the tourists attend that church, too?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], mm hmm. They did. They came. They liked to come over and listen to the Hawaiian service which they have at ten o'clock [a.m.].

IH: That's in Hawaiian language?

LR: They sing in Hawaiian. Oh, the father still talks in Latin. Well, he must be talking in English, now. But the singing was all in Hawaiian. Hawaiian hymns.

IH: Did you folks sing with the choir?

LR: Mm hmm, yeah, we sang. At one time or other, we used to. "Okay, all you kids, up there."

IH: At your home in Waikīkī, did Louise Akeo live with you folks?

LR: No, no. She had her own place. She lived up here in Kaimukī when we all lived there. So when we moved to Waikīkī, she decided, oh, she could lease land over there and she built a little house on Kūhio [Avenue], between 'Ōhūa and Paoakalani [Avenues]. She had a little cottage over there. And then, she rented out the house up here. Well, she, in fact, let my cousin use the house.

IH: And when you folks had hula practice?

LR: Well, she had her own group. Now, she had the Royal Hawaiian [Girls' Glee Club] group; my mother had the Honolulu Girls' [Glee Club] group.

IH: Oh, so you didn't dance with your aunt?

LR: No, not after my mother formed her group. My mother and my other aunt, Mrs. (May) Kamaka, formed this Honolulu Girls' group. When you have 'em too close, sometimes they fight. They (my mother and Auntie Louise) had an argument. So my mother and the chanter (Auntie May) picked up and left. Only because of the younger brother marrying one of her dancers and they didn't consult her before. Well, they consulted the oldest, which was my mother, who took care of all of them. She said, "Go ahead. If you're in love,

marry him." That's it. She was not the type to say that somebody was better than the other person.

IH: She was known as "Big Auntie," your mother?

LR: Yeah.

IH: How did she get that name?

LR: Because she was the oldest of the family and to respect her, they called her "Big Auntie." She had taken care of all of her sisters and brothers because her mother had died three months after the youngest boy was born. So it stuck with her. My sister was the baby at the time. And still till today, they call her "Baby."
"Hey, Baby."

(Laughter)

LR: It's funny 'cause all of her uncles, some of them are about her age. And cousins. So I come sixteen years later. I join (my mother's) sisters' and brothers' children, you see. That's why I'm closer to the younger kids than to her 'cause we're so far apart. But she's witty, you know. She's funny.

IH: So, there were only two of you, weren't there? You and your sister Marion?

LR: Uh huh [Yes], my sister.

IH: Did she also dance?

LR: She played music. Yeah, she played the guitar, ukulele, and piano.

IH: So pretty much your whole family was involved in . . .

LR: In music, mm hmm [yes], somehow. Then I had my nephew who got into it afterwards. After he graduated---well, while he was at Notre Dame, he'd come home summers and play the bass. He's the one that's with Alu Like.

IH: Oh, Van Diamond?

LR: Diamond.

IH: Your sister's son?

LR: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: And her married name is Diamond?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: Weren't they also living in Waikiki? The Diamond family?

LR: Yeah. That's the family. That's Marion's husband. Ex-husband, now. And Marion. And my mother and father, and me. And then, when Van was born, he lived there, too.

IH: Oh, they lived in the same house with you?

LR: Uh huh [Yes].

IH: Oh, I see.

LR: It was our family house.

IH: Oh, so four bedrooms was just right . . .

LR: Oh, yeah, right.

IH: Did your mother ever have parties or anything like that . . .

LR: Oh, yes. Always. With her visitor friends, people that she worked with. Johnny Noble who took us away to the Mainland so many times and his wife. The Royces from the Huntington Sheraton that was the managing director. They owned the Huntington. They sold their part over to Sheraton. Oh, she always had parties. The Cookes, the Kimballs, they were always over for something. A pā'ina, you know.

IH: Was it customary for you folks to dance at the parties?

LR: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We dance all the time. For every party. After the food was served, get the ukulele and the guitar, set up and dance. My aunts would get up and dance. Always . . .

IH: Did you folks make your own food?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], my mother was a terrific cook.

IH: And what kind of foods did they have at parties . . .

LR: I brought something out over here. Let me--can I get off of this for a minute?

IH: Oh, okay. Sure.

(Taping stops as LR gets photos, then resumes.)

LR: [This] picture here talks about people that came in on the Trans-Pacific yacht races. For like six years, they'd have it every, what, two years or something like that? My mom was one of the sponsors one year for one of the boats. So we had to go out outside of Kewalo Basin and wait for these boats to come in. And then, deck the crew with beautiful leis. Although, in this case, I was dancing at the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel] one evening. Then, you know when people rush up to Diamond Head to watch the boats come

in. We were trying to go the other way, you know, getting into traffic, and get down to Kewalo Basin where they were coming in. And like rushing in traffic. (Laughs) It wasn't far, but it still took us quite a bit of jockeying in and out of traffic. Well, we finally got there just as the boat was pulling in. And all the leis on our arms, decking all these fellows. You know, after being on the ocean for couple of weeks, I guess you get pretty tired, right? Then that's when all the champagne comes out and they're pouring it on each other.

Then after that, maybe a day or so later, it's time for a pā'ina. So they all would come over to my mom's place. In this particular case, the boat crew and their families and people that were at the hotel waiting, you know, from the Mainland, they get invited, too. So that's how there's so many of them there, sitting under the hau tree.

IH: They're all wearing leis. Was that customary to always give out . . .

LR: Yeah. Oh, yeah, she always had leis for her guests. Always. (LR describes the photo.) This lady here is Mrs. Steven Royce. Her husband was the managing director of the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] at the time.

IH: What year is this?

LR: That, the year of nineteen. . . . Oh, let's see, '49, I think. They [the yacht races] come on uneven years. She also came in on one of the ketches. She was the cook.

IH: Mrs. Royce?

LR: Mrs. Royce. (Chuckles) And her son was in another race, and he came on the Patalita when they broke some kind of record. But this year, the Morning Star came in and broke a record. And those are Mr. and Mrs. Rheems and their daughter Tawnsy. Some of these people live in Newport Beach, California. Most of those people at the time were living in Pasadena. Now, they have moved down south and living around Rancho Santa Fe outside of San Diego.

IH: On an earlier picture, you were telling me where you folks used to make the imu for your parties?

LR: Oh, yes. (Chuckles) Yes. In the Seaside property belonging to the hotels. It was on the other side of the fence. So we got permission from Mr. Royce. "May we kālua the pig on your property over there?"

He said, "Well, sure. There's lots of room back there."

So that's what we did. In the background, (LR shows another photo) you'll see the bachelor's quarters of the men that stayed at work

at the Royal and the Moana Hotels.

IH: Now, this imu, was it left dug or did you cover it every time . . .

LR: Oh, they'd cover it up all the time. All the time. Was all sandy back there. All sand. Was really neat back there.

IH: So, they weren't able to grow grass, then, if it was all sand there?

LR: No. Hardly. Maybe a patch here and there, but mostly sand. Interesting, isn't it? I wish I had more pictures of that place. That's that same fence running down the back [of our yard].
(Laughs) Unadorned. (Laughs)

IH: When your mom had parties at her house, how many people could you hold in your yard?

LR: About a hundred. Using part of the garage.

IH: Oh, wow, that's quite a few.

LR: That's open. Yeah. In the house, maybe forty. But going outside, she could accommodate that many.

IH: (Referring to another photo.) You were the first May Day queen at the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel]?

LR: Nineteen thirty-nine, I don't know if I was the first May Day queen, but that year they went all out for this one particular time. Maybe so. Maybe so because they had been using the visiting queen from the University of Hawai'i each year. They would come down. After their festivities at the University, they'd come down to the Royal because being the most exclusive hotel on the beach, they would show their guests and invite the court to come down.

IH: Was that a big thing at the University before?

LR: Yes, it was.

IH: Why was that?

LR: Well, you see, the city and county had their own. They were using the girls from the University until latter part of the [third] decade. And University said, "Well, let's have our own." And they used the girls from the "U" [University], then they started to get girls from the high schools to be the girls representing the different islands. Of course, we didn't have too many high schools then. It was Kamehameha, Punahou, let's see, McKinley, Roosevelt. I mean, enough to fill the areas where they should. And that's what they did. Later on, they used all University girls and then went into the ethnic group--Hawaiian, the Chinese, Cosmopolitan, Caucasian. So this year in particular, they decided at the Royal

they would have their own. So maybe that's why it says the first time they had their own May queen. But previous to that, my aunt [Louise Akeo] used to have her shows and present her girls. But this year, they wanted to have it really big. So they went all out with the strands of plumeria for my cape which I held in front of me. That's why my arm is up this way holding the two support straps, like this.

IH: Oh, you had to hold it up?

LR: I had to hold it. It was like dragging how many pounds on the ground. But luckily, I had the girls back there holding up the ends. You see how long they are?

IH: Was gorgeous.

LR: Oh, was gorgeous. And then, each time I took a step I had to make sure it didn't slip off of my shoulders. (Laughs) It was fun. Then, my kahili bearers were my two cousins.

IH: Was that fresh-flower kahilis?

LR: Fresh flower. All plumerias again.

IH: And how were you chosen as the May queen?

LR: By the manager [of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel]. My aunt was then one of the judges, and so was a representative from the Bray [hula] troupe. I think there were three or four who chose whom they wanted, but, you know, of all the dancers then.

IH: Oh, so that was one of the qualifications, that you had to be a dancer?

LR: Oh, yeah, well, from the dancers that danced at the Royal Hawaiian. We had five, you see. So, that's how I was chosen.

IH: What was the ceremony like? You said they made it a big deal.

LR: Yes, well, I came out from the ocean side with all these girls with the leis and walked around the dance floor. Circled the dance floor, got onto the stage and was crowned by Malcolm Beelby, the band leader. Then I had to perform and do the "Song of Old Hawai'i" dancing. (LR sings:) "There's a perfume of a million flowers." And I was smiling and hoping that my nose (laughs) wouldn't act up. All I had to do was sneeze. (Laughs)

IH: Did you dance with that cape on?

LR: No. I took it off, yes. But then, when after I was finished, all right, I had to put it back on. Before I left, I had to put it back on. But each princess were beautifully gowned, came up and each one presented their floral emblem, like they usually do, from

each island. Then all the girls danced together. Was very beautiful. Then they had the younger girls in the skirts dance. It was like a very nice, not too long a show. But enough to make it interesting and pretty. And then, I put the cape back on again. The little young girls came around so I could get off the stage. Otherwise, I'd never get off--remember, with all those leis. (Laughs) And then, I proceeded down the stairs, and then out.

IH: Yeah, that's really gorgeous.

LR: Yes, it was. It took hours to make that cape.

IH: Did you have to make the cape?

LR: No, no. The ladies did it from the group.

IH: Is that plumeria . . .

LR: All plumerias.

IH: And they're not strung singly, are they?

LR: Yes, they are.

IH: Oh, looks so full.

LR: Oh, you know, those days, healthy-looking flowers. (Chuckles) Really healthy. They were big and beautiful. Really pretty.

IH: Okay. Should we stop here maybe?

LR: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 13-93-2-86

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Lila Reiplinger (LR)

May 30, 1986

Kāhala, O'ahu

BY: 'Iwalani Hodges (IH)

IH: This is an interview with Lila Reiplinger at her home in Kāhala, O'ahu on May 30, 1986. The interviewer is 'Iwalani Hodges.

Okay, first I wanted to ask you a few questions about our last interview. Do you know who your family bought that Waikīkī property from? Who owned it before you?

LR: Oh, no. No, I can't remember. Whether it was a realtor or. . . . It was so far back and I forgot to ask. But it was just in the area where 'Āinahau was, you know. And then, the Queen's Hospital owned the rest of it in front of us.

IH: That would be the Seaside cottages [property]?

LR: Well, you know. Let's see, Queen Emma property. But I understood that later on when they opened the road and opened that property up front towards the beach, it was owned by Queen's Hospital at the time.

IH: What would you consider the boundaries of 'Āinahau?

LR: Let's see. 'Āinahau ran up from Kalākaua [Avenue] and down to Tusitala [Street]. The next road is the Ala Wai.

IH: And then, from. . . .

LR: On the sides, Ka'iulani Avenue until Pualeilani [which is now Kealohilani Avenue]. It's off of Lili'uokalani [Avenue], in that area.

IH: What was there when you first moved in, in 'Āinahau?

LR: Well, it was already laid with streets. Private homes were already in there. So we have to go back after the time when [Princess] Ka'iulani passed away when the place was subdivided and people built on, such as the Petersons had a place, Olmos, the Loves. So many others, I can't remember.

- IH: What was there from Kānekapōlei to the school, Jefferson School [i.e., Waikīkī School at that time]? What was in between there?
- LR: When we moved in?
- IH: Mm hmm [Yes].
- LR: Streets were laid then. They were Ka'iulani, Lili'uokalani, 'Ōhūa, Paoakalani. And then, not Monsarrat--Kapahulu. Those were already in.
- IH: They were already connected from Kūhiō . . .
- LR: Mm hmm [Yes].
- IH: . . . to the Ala Wai?
- LR: And then the Ala Wai was already in.
- IH: Were there housing in there already?
- LR: Yes, mm hmm. Parkers live up there, up on Paoakalani Avenue. Let me see, what's their first name? Oh, dear. Palmer Parker and his brother, his family. They were on Kūhiō and Paoakalani [Avenues]. Big home. Since I was a youngster then, names didn't matter until I grew older. And then, I remembered Vesta Parker. She went to Kamehameha. And her sister, Mrs. ["Pio"] Hazelden. They all lived there at one time. It was the Parker home. They were old homes. And the Bishaws lived there. And I think I told you about the Mossmans. Things have to come back slowly, you know. But they were all old homes in there. That's what I remember. As the years went along, it just boomed all around, from Kānekapōlei on over, down to McCully. Apartments came up, private homes. Many visitors were buying, too. Like the po'e Haole, they were all buying. They could afford. And you see, oh, so many.
- IH: So when you moved in in the '30s, would you say that Waikīkī was mostly local people?
- LR: Yes, they were. To begin with, lot of local people.
- IH: When do you think the Mainland . . .
- LR: The boom came up right after about 1939, '30s and '40s. Everybody was buying. There was an open market.
- IH: Was real estate cheap at that time in Waikīkī?
- LR: Oh, yes. Well, we would say real cheap, now, to us. But at that time, little expensive, I think. Hard to get the dollar, you know.
- IH: Why would you say a lot of the Mainland people started coming at that time?

LR: Why did they? Well, Waikīkī was very popular. It was known throughout the world. Duke Kahanamoku made it famous, very famous. They wanted to come out here because the weather was conducive to their health. We had many, many visitors that came out here. And they made friends. They looked into real estate and they bought. Some people came out here to work, actually, too, in the '40s. Working with the navy yard. We had lots of military. They, too, bought. Some were teachers that were able to save enough to buy, and they did. Educators. And too, we were building up.

IH: Were hotels already being built in the early '40s?

LR: At that time, we had the Moana, the Royal, Halekūlani, Niumalu, and many other smaller ones.

IH: But no new ones?

LR: Let me see. Not until after the war [World War II]. Then everything went up. Let's see, I can remember out towards the beach area, they were all private homes. And, let's see. . . .

IH: Which beach area are you talking about?

LR: I'm talking about in front of Waikīkī, from the Moana up towards Diamond Head. And also where, let's see, whose home was that? Where--oh, dear--the Kaimana Hotel is, was a home of one of our princesses, I think it was. Oh, gosh. You know, you can sit here and talk about it and not remember. Then after you leave, it comes popping into my head. But in that area, you know, was so beautiful out there. Every so often in the papers you'll read, and then you'll reminisce, as kids. Then, too, the Kapi'olani Park was still--well, I can remember the date trees, the polo field. . . .

IH: Oh, the polo field was still there then?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], mm hmm. It was still there.

IH: They still had polo games at the time?

LR: They still had them. Not as frequently. And let me see, where the old bandstand was, we had lily ponds. We used to play in there. Catching the little mosquito fish, you know. (Laughs) But that was a nice place to play near the tennis courts where my dad used to have tennis clubs. That's where he trained the boys. I used to remember listening to the band every Sunday and playing in the lily pond.

(Laughter)

LR: It wasn't one; it was, maybe, I think four of them. Big squares.

IH: Where was the bandstand located?

LR: Same place where the new one is. Not the Shell, now. The old bandstand.

IH: Oh, so, from that time, they've been playing every weekend . . .

LR: Oh, yes. Way, way back. Oh, yeah. [Nineteen] thirties. We used to play and listen to the music. People would sit down there and listen all afternoon. It was fun.

IH: At that time, the people who went to the bandstand, were they mostly local people?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: So, was geared more towards the local people . . .

LR: To local people with their families. They go to the beach across the street, come back to the bandstand, have a picnic, and listen to the music.

IH: How nice.

LR: Soon as we heard the first sound of the horns of the big band, everybody would run. Just sit there and listen.

IH: Did they have different bands that came every week?

LR: No, the Royal Hawaiian band. Yeah. I still remember that. It was such a treat to us kids. We enjoyed that. We didn't have television, right? (Chuckles) We had to make use of whatever we could.

IH: Did they have parades in those days?

LR: Mm hmm, yeah.

IH: What were the parades like?

LR: We had, first of all, the Kamehameha Day. They were fabulous. For a while we had people coming from different islands, bringing all their paraphernalia with them. And if they couldn't, they'd maybe ask a group from here to represent their island, whether it'd be a band or a school or something. For many years, we represented the island of Hawai'i. Believe it or not, they even sent us hāpu'u, you know, fern trees that we put on the big trucks. They had ferns. We were sitting down, peeping out, just like we're in the forest, with the all the liko lehua. Was just beautiful.

IH: When you say "we," who . . .

LR: Well, my mother's group, singers. Sometimes she would have the children from the park. She'd put them on the float.

IH: So, you folks made your own float, then?

LR: Yeah, we decorated ours. And they sent us a truck. We took whatever we could.

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

LR: All right. Where were we now?

IH: Talking about the parades in Waikīkī . . .

LR: Oh, yeah. Okay. They had us do Hawai'i. And then, of course, at that time Eben Low was in charge of the Kamehameha Day parades. The one thing they did was, for the island of Hawai'i, Mrs. Perry Fiske, who was then Anna Lai Hip, who was a Lindsey, Anna Lindsey. Became Mrs. Lai Hip. She rode her own horse, brought it down from Kamuela every year. Beautiful woman she was and a beautiful horsewoman, a rider with carriage and poise. She came every year. They tried to get a rider from different island group. I mean, the island itself. And the groups from here. We had, let's see, Honolulu Girls', Bina Mossman's group, the Royal Hawaiian Girls' Group sometimes. Other social groups would be in it. They'd be singing.

IH: Did the hotels put out floats like today?

LR: No, no, no. That came later. That came later when Aloha Week started. No, this was all done by the group from here and there was a Kamehameha Day organization headed by Eben Low. He got all these people to get going. Try to get the Chamber of Commerce interested. That was our big parade. The other big parade was . . .

IH: Before you go on, the Kamehameha Day parade, what was its route?

LR: Let me see where we start from. Downtown. Wait a minute, I have to think. Not far. I think we started 'A'ala Park and worked our way up to the Palace and around the 'Iolani Palace and ended right there.

IH: Oh, so, never came into Waikīkī?

LR: I don't think Kamehameha does come into Waikīkī, does it?

IH: Today, it does.

LR: Oh, now, it does. It goes out to Ala Moana. Oh, it starts at the Palace, doesn't it? Then it goes down to Ala Moana, and then to Waikīkī. No, those days, it went right in Downtown Honolulu.

IH: Gee, that must have been nice.

LR: It was very nice. You know, Honolulu wasn't that big at the time

until later. Then the next big parade was November 11. November 11th or 12th? What is it? Armistice Day? All the schools came out with their ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] drill team--well, groups. They all had companies. Of course, we didn't have many schools then. Kamehameha, St. Louis, Punahou, McKinley, that's four, right? That's all we had, those days. Then, later, Roosevelt and, let's see. And as the years went by, few more schools that were in the Honolulu area.

IH: Was that parade route the same as Kamehameha Day . . .

LR: No. This parade was of all schools, honoring the dead, memorial for the Armistice Day. They had their companies, drill companies, from ROTC and their band. Each company had a sponsor. Of course, it was THE thing for the high school, right? They showed off their girls in their uniforms, too. Very pretty, very well done. St. Louis had a bugle and drum corps, of course, their band. Kamehameha wore their snappy West Point outfits. Those were the days, you know. Real nice. Punahou wore, let's see, they had khaki, I think. But Kamehameha had the best. St. Louis had a nice outfit, too, for their drum and bugle corps. And then, McKinley, they had khaki, too, I think.

IH: Where did they hold the parade?

LR: They held the parade from. . . . I know it ended up at the Natatorium. So we started. . . . It wasn't a very long parade. How did we start now? Coming down Waikiki. (Laughs) I remember, one year, they came down Monsarrat [Avenue] and made the turn, came around. But it must have been longer than that. You know, we were all so excited. We all sat along--you know where the ironwood trees are in front of the tennis courts and all [at Kapi'olani Park]? Let's see, how did they come down the other way? Through Waikiki but not far. I think, Fort DeRussy, and ended up at the Natatorium. And that's it.

IH: So those were the first parades in Waikiki, for the Armistice Day?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], the Armistice Day parade. Two big things for the year.

IH: And then, the Aloha Week parades . . .

LR: Came in after the war [World War II].

IH: And those parades were always through Waikiki?

LR: Always through Waikiki, from Fort DeRussy, they started. Now, they start where? Down Ala Moana [Park] side?

IH: Yes, I think so.

LR: That's when they tried to get the big-time carriers, sort of like,

all the hotels, airlines, to start doing for the visitor.
Encourage the visitors to come out here.

IH: That was after the war?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes]. Waikīkī also had a mini parade they called Waikīkī Friday. In the evenings, they'd start going into all the hotels, walking along, you know, part of Waikīkī, Kalākaua [Avenue]. And they'd be singing, like serenading right through. Go into the hotels and go out. Like the Pied Piper, everybody following, you know.

IH: And when was this?

LR: During the '50s, the late '50s.

IH: And who was that sponsored by?

LR: Just the hotels wanted to serenade. They had different groups coming in and singing along. It was fun. It didn't last too long, but it was fun. Get the people interested. That's when it was really aloha. We didn't have too many package deals those days, (chuckles) like we do today. And every hotel--what I liked about in the '50s and '60s, was that on boat days when we had the ships come in, the Lurline, Mariposa, we would have a greeting at each hotel for the visitor. Whether it be leis or pineapple juice served by the hula girls, serenades by the hotel singers. In the evenings, they would offer Hawaiian performances, every hotel, whether it be the Moana, Royal, Niumalu. It was a famous place. Nighttime was booming. And then, (Kaiser) came in after that, after they bought the Niumalu, where Alfred Apaka made his name. Of course, we all sang together for "Hawai'i Calls," where he made his name first. That was held at the Moana Hotel.

IH: Did the importance of boat days carry on into the '60s?

LR: Yes, yes. We still had it in the '60s until the ships stopped.

IH: How often did they come in during the '60s?

LR: Twice a week. We had one from California. And then, one coming back from down under. Well, wait, previous to the wartime. One in the morning, one in the . . . From down under. After the wartime, it was from Mainland, here. It was once a week. Ships arrived, let's see, Friday, and left Saturday. And then, pretty soon, they were leaving the same day. But for years, it was a big thing, boat day, steamer day. People rushing down there to greet people. Then when they were leaving, everybody rushing down there to find some big party that was going on, you know. Parties all the time going on. It was fun. Meeting them. Sending them off again. But let's see, of course, wait a minute. We did have another line that came in, the Leilani Line. So we had two boat days. Matson and Leilani.

IH: And when did Leilani come in?

LR: Oh, I think they came in around the '50s, '50 and '60. It didn't last too long. 'Cause Matson had the whole thing going.

IH: Plus, I guess air travel was starting to come in, too.

LR: Yes, yes. And then it's kind of hard.

IH: I was wondering, how, for your neighborhood on Kānekapōlei, how it changed as the years went by. Say, maybe, from the '30s to the '40s, probably didn't have too much change . . .

LR: No.

IH: . . . but after the war [World War II], then what kind of changes did you notice in the neighborhood?

LR: In our neighborhood after the war? Well, we had a lot more people here. More people were living in Waikīkī due to the fact that after the war, some of the people stayed here, people that were already working at Pearl Harbor, civilians, and decided to make Honolulu their home. So naturally, they stayed here. More apartments were needed and they started to build right around us. And up, up it went. People that were working at hotels had apartments or they started to buy property around here. And they, too, started to build their own homes, which they converted later on into apartments.

IH: When did you as a family or a separate household, when did you start feeling crowded? Because you mentioned that that was the reason you folks moved out.

LR: When the hippies started to come in. Now, when was that time when they had all these hippies?

IH: In the '60s?

LR: Late '60s.

IH: All during the '60s, yeah.

LR: I remember, yeah, it started to get crowded. Then, across the street, of course, they had laid the streets right through to Kūhiō Avenue. Widen Kūhiō Avenue and all the streets went up to Kūhiō.

IH: Was that done during the '50s?

LR: Yes, late '50s. Beginning already. The [Royal State] Theater went up. They had more walking traffic. Need a thoroughfare, you know.

IH: That must have made a big difference, yeah, the opening of the road. You no longer had a dead-end street.

LR: No longer dead-end. It was no longer yours, it was everybody's.

IH: Everbody's, yeah.

LR: And we had apartments alongside . . .

IH: How did that affect you folks, living there?

LR: Well, at the beginning, it was all right, but then soon, they had these new apartments going up on the left of us. Then this new hotels going up. Taxes were getting higher. You didn't have the the privacy that you once had. People thought we had an apartment house. They'd walk in and knock on the door and ask us if we had (chuckles) rooms to rent or whatever. It wasn't the same. It was just always people walking up and down, up and down. And then, being that the hotel was built across the street, Aloha Surf, we felt that our privacy was invaded. I mean, here we were, we had a two-story house and, across the street, here's this eight-story building or ten-story building. They could just peer right into you, you know. So we decided. And of course, there were some other developers were trying to get the whole block from our boundary to the Ala Wai [Boulevard] to build a condo, a hotel. Well, when two other people sold out, that left us sandwiched between an apartment building and a stone wall on the (chuckles) other side. So, that's the reason, I believe, they had decided to let it go and go back to the old homestead in Kaimukī and build there, which they did.

IH: And that was in the late '60s?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], '68. [Nineteen] sixty-seven, '68.

IH: So you folks lived there for about thirty-three years?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: That's nice.

LR: It was fun while it lasted. But looking at Waikīkī today, I don't think I would like to have lived there during those years after because it isn't the same. It was nice to be right in Waikīkī. We had access to the beaches, to the hotels--was in walking distance. We wanted to see a parade, just park right at home, or come and visit Mama there and walk up the street. Those days, you can't find them anymore. I guess nowhere's that way. But that was Waikīkī and the change that it went through and how it became a concrete jungle. You know, from coconut trees and green grass and sprawling homes. For many years, Halekulani tried to keep it a sprawling hotel. You know, no more than two stories high. Look at it today [since it was rebuilt]. It's so cold-looking. We have gone there to visit. I started dancing there when I was five, seven [years old], you know. And then to look at it, the beach is there but the hotel is different. The warmth isn't there, not yet.

They've lost that. But in today's world, they say, "Who cares? They making money."

IH: They making money. (Chuckles)

LR: The other night, one of our girls said, "Ho, you know, it really is a really snappy hotel."

I said, "Oh, yeah. Just like any Mainland hotel." I said, "But you know, there's something the Royal still has." I said, "It still has its warmth." They haven't changed its appearance. Maybe the people inside are different. But still, when you look at it, you say, "Oh, there's the Royal Hawaiian Hotel." That's the way I feel. The people may not be the same, but there you still have a landmark, standing from your younger days. You remember. So that sort of helps, even though it's Japanese-owned. Too bad. It's just too bad that we just couldn't hang onto those. Money, money.

IH: Yeah. Waikīkī got way too expensive.

LR: Oh, and every block you walk on, there's five ABC Stores.

(Laughter)

LR: There isn't anything there that's truly Hawaiian.

IH: That's a big difference from before, isn't it?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes].

IH: I mean, before, Waikīkī used to offer . . .

LR: So many . . .

IH: . . . real Hawaiian stuff.

LR: Yes, they did, they did.

IH: But not anymore.

LR: That's why we have to think about it. Our people say they want this, they want that. They don't want to go back to the old style of living. They don't want to get up and do. They're not going to have anything to eat, right? So, here comes the Japanese. (Laughs) And we going like that too, you know.

(Laughter)

LR: Oh, well, I'm getting off the track. (Chuckles)

IH: Okay. I was going to ask you about dancing with the USO [United Service Organizations] during World War II. What was that like?

LR: It was very interesting. My mother had her group and they worked with Mrs. Warren, Edith Warren, who was then with the Tourist Bureau, she was. Working with the Army Special Services, we were able to take our performers out to different bases, sing and dance for them, and return back home. We went to some of the navy ships and to their bases, submarine, all over. Where it wouldn't be like a secret or something, we'd be able to dance. The R and R [rest and recreation] boys that came home, we sang for them at the--what is that?--Kulamanu Dance Studio out here. Used to be Kulamanu Race Track. We had a race track right out here, you know.

IH: In Kāhala?

LR: Yes. Where Farmer's Road is, where 'Aukai [Avenue]. . . . Oh, my stomach's growling. It's picking it up.

(Laughter)

LR: Anyway, [Prince Jonah Kūhiō] Kalaniana'ole used to have his riding academy out here for many years. And then, they turned it into a dance studio building. That's where they had some of their parties out here. They gave them like they would call "tea dances." We'd serenade over here, go up to Kaiko'o. Go to the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], the Army-Navy YMCA. Go to the one down at Pearl Harbor. And way out into the boonies out at, they call that bivouac camps, up in. . . . Where'd that be? I'm trying to think of, past Ka'a'awa. What's it--Ka'a'awa, Hau'ula, way up in the mountains. Wahiawa.

IH: Kahana Bay?

LR: Kahana Bay. Yeah.

IH: Oh, down there they had?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], they had 'em, too. Kāne'ohe Air Station, all over.

IH: So you folks had a chance to go all over, then?

LR: All over.

IH: And you sang and danced?

LR: Mm hmm, yeah, with the group. I was a dancer, one of 'em. We had about eight dancers. They were well received. Nothing crazy in our group. I mean, we had the Hawaiian groups. Formed one of the Hawaiian groups. In the other areas, special services, they had, let's see, the other type of dancing, jazz dancing, comedy, Shakespearean plays. They had all kinds, you know, to fit all groups.

IH: Did that continue throughout the war?

LR: Throughout the war, mm hmm [yes].

IH: So, was that considered a war job or was that a volunteer . . .

LR: No, it was a paid job. Groups got so much money. We split it with the groups that went out. No big thing. I mean, it was money for those that would otherwise stay at home. And was interesting to go out and see different places. Hey, I never saw some of the places up in the mountains before.

(Telephone rings. Interview stops, then resumes.)

LR: We finished. . . . I said we went up to Kahana Bay and how pretty it was out there. Kane'ohe Air Station. In fact, I think, all over this island.

IH: Did they have Queen's Surf open at that time for the military?

LR: Let's see. It was open for R and R. They had a place called Breakers right next to it. You know where the seawall juts out to the ocean? Well, just beyond that. Just before---well, in fact, it ran into Queen's Surf and was another place that they used. They had Maluhia which was on the side of--at Fort DeRussy. Was another place they had for dancing, socializing. All the military clubs had something.

IH: And they took over the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel]?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], the navy did.

IH: What did they use that for?

LR: For the fellows coming back from down under.

IH: Oh, was like an R and R?

LR: The navy, mm hmm, yeah.

IH: Did they take any other hotels?

LR: In fact, my husband was there, too. They had it for the submariners, and air force, navy. Let me see, what other hotels? No, I think it was just the Royal.

IH: So, did the other hotels just continue regular business during the war?

LR: They had regular business, and then they had. . . . Well, the military came out on passes. You know, the officers that came out. We didn't have too much civilian travel unless they were just civilians from Honolulu that used the hotel.

IH: But were the hotels able to remain open, like the Moana and the

Halekūlani?

LR: Oh, yes, they did. Mm hmm, they did. Halekūlani had many families living in their hotel. They lived there throughout the years. In fact, one of my classmates lived there with his family, the Botts family. They lived there. They housed many families.

IH: I think you mentioned that after the war, you helped to reopen the Royal?

LR: Mm hmm [Yes], the reopening of the Royal Hawaiian. That's when they brought the big band from San Francisco, Joe Reichman. And then, we had Lei Becker, who was their vocalist. In the same band we had Jack DeMello, who is now very prominent in music here in Hawai'i with his son as a producer-recorder, and then his wife. His wife was formerly from Honolulu. I opened with Al Perry's Singing Surfriders. I was a dancer and vocalist there, along with Haleloke. And our Honolulu Girls' [Glee Club] worked in the same show, reopening the Royal Hawaiian.

IH: How long after the navy left the hotel was it ready to be reopened?

LR: Oh, quite a few years. Let's see, the navy left here in '45 and '[4]6--about couple of years.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IH: . . . Royal Hawaiian Hotel, what kinds of things had to be renovated in order for them to reopen?

LR: Oh, the whole place. All the rooms had to be done over. The lobby. In fact, it was changed around a whole lot. The whole dining room was done up differently. Before the war, the lobby was green-and-pink tile. They had mosaic tile. Velvet carpets, of course, they had to take those out. I guess the years of wear and tear. All the blackout material had to be taken out.

IH: Was that on the windows, you mean?

LR: Oh, everything, yes, 'cause they're on the beach. So the Royal decor became on the more red, pink scheme. White, tinge of turquoise. It was very pretty. Little different from what we were so used to previous to that. The floors were done over, the shops were done over. They moved shops around. Of course, they always enjoyed the elite from all over the world, being that it was THE hotel where all the VIPs made their home.

IH: Now that you were, I guess, little bit older after the war, at that time did you start mingling with the hotel guests after shows and

things like that?

LR: They would meet us, talking in the lobby. It wasn't one of these strict things that you couldn't mingle with the guests. They would come up and talk with you and you'd talk with them right in the lobby. We had many, many friends that we have kept throughout the years.

IH: Did tourism come back right away after the war?

LR: When our first ships started to come in, before the airlines. And renovating all the ships, too. You know, they were troop carriers during the war. And then, Matson had to redo their ships. And then, they started to come back in. It was in 1946, '47. Just as long a time that the hotel had to be done. Lots of excitement.

IH: So from about '44 to '46 was a lot of activity, then, renovating things?

LR: Yeah, mm hmm. Getting people back in the status of hotel training again. More people added to the roster. More new faces.

IH: Before we talk about your Mainland trips, I thought maybe you'd like to say something about your sister Marion because you folks were in the entertainment business together.

LR: After my mother started, my sister got in. She was always our guitar player and got in on the administrative work, like hiring. My mother hired. And if she saw somebody she thought would be good, you know, join the group. Making arrangements. After my mother said, "Okay. It's time that I taper off a little bit. You can be doing something on this line." So telling my sister to be able to take charge, which she did. She had the group. Of course, I, too, doing double duty. I would help on the. . . . Let me see. My aunt doing Kodak [Hula Show], I'd help her. My mother says, "Help your aunt," so I help her. I was still doing "Hawai'i Calls" with Al Perry at the hotel with Webley Edwards. So I do that until, I think, while raising my children. I'm living in Kailua and I said, "Well, I have to give up something, take care of my children." My husband had to work. Everybody was working at the time. So I felt they needed me more than the airwaves.

(Laughter)

LR: So, I did. I left "Hawai'i Calls" and stayed with all my children till they were older. Then I did part-time work at the Kodak show while they were in school. I was still working in the evenings with my mother at the Halekulani [Hotel], which we did maybe twice a week. That was enough time to be away. The mornings, I used to do that with the Kodak. So that kept me away enough hours. The rest of the time, I was with my children till they grew up. In the meantime, while they were at Star of the Sea [School], I was teaching hula in 1955 every afternoon for a number of years until

'67. Then I went to the YMCA, which I'm still working with every Saturday.

IH: So, your work has always been involved in dance and entertainment.

LR: Dance and music. And my sister was always there after my mother had left and age then was getting the best of her. She had several surgeries on different parts of her body, poor thing. She worked hard. She died at the age of ninety-two. My sister had to take over. But previous to that, she was in Maunalani Hospital for several years, but very happy. We still were doing our work at the Halekulani.

IH: But your sister, now, she wasn't strictly in music and entertainment.

LR: No. She's a career lady in education. Many schools. She started Pa'auilo. She came to Kāne'ohe, Benjamin Parker [Elementary]. She went to Fern School, Kalākaua School, Kaimukī Intermediate, and she ended at Kaimukī High.

IH: What did she teach?

LR: She taught English and music in the high school.

IH: Okay. Now, your Mainland trips started when you were quite young.

LR: Yes. Going up with my mother when she was a delegate to Asilomar and the Olympic Games. And then, that started when I was about five. Then my mother and aunt's group, the Royal Hawaiian Girls' [Glee Club], made a few trips to the Mainland and the West Coast. I went along, too, as a little dancer. They performed at the Fairmont [Hotel], Carmel, and did recordings there. But it seems as though that my mother always had a trip for us somewhere during the summer. I continued to go with her group, the Honolulu Girls, touring the West Coast. Starting from San Francisco, the Golden Gate Theater, down to Coronado in the San Diego area. So you're familiar with that place.

IH: You were fortunate to have traveled so much in your young years.

LR: Yes, in my young years. She made sure that we saw different places. Well, of course, we repeated some because we always had a home base. Even over to Catalina Island. When we were fifteen, danced at Balboa Newport Harbor Yacht Club and did so many things. Touring, sightseeing. You know, always made a point we're going to some special place, some special thing. Like all the missions . . .

IH: That was done mostly during the summer?

LR: Uh huh [Yes], always during the summers. Soon as school was over.

IH: But then I think you mentioned once that you were in New York going to . . .

LR: Oh, yes. I went to New York in my junior year [of high school] and danced at the Hotel Lexington with Lani McIntire, who replaced Ray Kinney coming home to Hawai'i for a vacation. While we were there, we had company. It was the group from the St. Regis. I think, Elmer Lee and his group. Clara Inter--"Hilo Hattie." So in our group at the Lexington, we had "Girly" McShane, Salome Pickard, Eloise Gaspar and myself. My mother was our chaperone. And too, we had to attend school. So, our experience there, going to school and working at the Hotel Lexington, was quite an experience. I enjoyed going upstate, New York, visiting West Point, watching one of their biggest drills, I guess, parades. It was a Memorial Day parade, I think, they had there. And we were able to see it. Then coming back to the Catskills? That's where it is, isn't it? We'll find out. (Laughs) It was really nice. I enjoyed that. My few months that we had there. Then we opened at the Hurricane Club after we finished at the Lexington. And we stayed there longer because we had to finish our semester in school. So [representatives from] the Hurricane came up and they asked us to dance there our last couple of weeks.

IH: What year was this that you went up?

LR: Nineteen forty.

IH: How did you get along with the other Mainland kids? What was your reaction to them?

LR: Oh, was fine. We had no trouble. We had no trouble talking with them. In fact, they asked us all kind of questions.

IH: What was their impression of . . .

LR: Seeing a Hawaiian?

IH: Yes.

LR: Their impression was that they didn't expect us to be so modern. I mean, we didn't look like cannibals. We are from the South Pacific, right, or the Pacific Ocean. And we wore clothing, same thing they did. We used forks and knives the same way they did. We ate the same food they did.

IH: That surprised them?

LR: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Because, well, they think of people that are foreign and not heard of, you know. Unless they were in the musical world where they would hear Hawaiian music or know what it's about. They would think otherwise. Although they had many Hawaiians that lived in New York--not in New York proper, they lived out in the suburbs. But they all were in music. But they're

all intermarried, too, you see. We had people, let's say, our history teacher. She thought, well, we were still the Sandwich Islands, which we corrected her at the time and said, "No, we're the territory of Hawai'i." It's funny. We laughed. (Laughs) And she was embarrassed.

(Laughter)

LR: So, after they got to know us, talking, we had lot of great friends. We kept our correspondence going until the war broke out, and we just lost track. I suppose lot of them went to Europe because while we were in New York, Hitler had invaded Poland, 1940. So in a year or so, half of those kids were gone somewhere. Although it was a girls' school, they all liked adventure, right? Lots of them did. So that New York trip was quite a success, too. You know, social wise, the way we lived and the way they lived, no difference.

IH: Traveling all around like you did, did you have occasion to dance for, entertain for, and to meet famous people?

LR: Oh, yes. All in Hawai'i, though.

IH: Oh, all over here.

LR: Most of them were here. Oh, we danced for movie stars, so many, you know. We danced for them there in California while we were at the Huntington Sheraton [Hotel]. Gail Patrick, she's one of the older people. Producer of the Perry Mason programs, I should say. Harold Lloyd, Gary Cooper, the Crosbys. Jackie Cooper. In fact, he was down at Coronado one evening. He was trying to sing by the piano with the piano player and he was watching us dance. He was a very nice person. Oh, there were so many others that we can't keep track. In Hawai'i, well, I think I told you about those. President Roosevelt, Eisenhower, all those other people were here. King Hussein, all the big notables.

IH: When you folks entertained for them, did you also get to meet them?

LR: Mm hmm, mm hmm, yes. And the King and Queen of Thailand--Siam, was it? Yeah, when they were here. Because we worked with the navy and we worked with the army, that's how we were able to do it.

IH: Do you still entertain in Waikīkī at all?

LR: Not in Waikīkī. We do private work.

IH: When was the last time you entertained in Waikīkī?

LR: Let's see. At the Halekūlani the night it closed. We were there Sunday night and was our last night. And they closed, I believe. . . Well, we were the last ones to end it up. But we felt that we did our jobs. We started there and we ended there. So we don't

feel badly that we're not there now. You know, we like the old place. Now that my sister hasn't been too well, she's had surgery and she fractured her back, it's hard for her to carry a guitar. So Van and I, her son, still carry on. We just do our work. And we still belong to the [musician's] union.

IH: When you were entertaining at the Halekūlani, were you folks part of the Halekūlani Girls?

LR: No, we were the Diamond Serenaders then. It changed to Diamond Serenaders in the '60s when my mother said to my sister, "Carry on. Our group is smaller, so you can change it from Honolulu." Although the tax papers still read "Honolulu Girls," it became Diamond Serenaders. Then she changed it as years went by.

IH: Who were the members of the Halekūlani Girls . . .

LR: Oh, that was Alice Fredlund. Alice Fredlund, let me see, Sybil Bright Andrews. She passed away. And who was the other girl? One, two. At one time was Linda Dela Cruz but she's not there. I think they use Iwalani Kahalewai. They change every so often, but as I remember, that's the Halekūlani Girls. And then, they had two men's groups. Let's see, that's where we used to have our big group, at the Halekūlani on Thursday nights. After dinner, they have a big show. Then we put the whole group on. (Chuckles) That was very pleasant. All the guests can sit around and they have a nice Polynesian show. The stories, and dancing, and the singing. Very calm and sedate. No nightclub stuff.

IH: How would you describe the entertainment atmosphere in Waikīkī today?

LR: Well, it's very fast moving. I haven't seen the show at the Royal right now, but at one time it was kind of more Las Vegas type. Well, you know, people that travel that way expect something like that.

IH: You don't think they come here to see the authentic Hawaiian . . .

LR: They do come. And lot of people say they can't find it. They're anxious to find soft, nonamplified music. Because they can see all this kind of stuff back on the Mainland. So, we're competing with that. Perhaps because we have so many package groups that come down. They want to see a fast moving show.

IH: Does the Kodak Hula Show offer something more authentic?

LR: Yes, they do for camera bugs. Well, actually, they use the poi pounding, they have coconut tree climbing. They tried to keep some of the 'olapas, the ancient dances. And the models, the old-time ladies that dance around with leis. And line dances. And insertion of a little Tahitian to keep the pace going. I haven't seen it for a while, but if they're going on the same format, would

be that. They're able to take pictures, you see, which you can't do at night. Everything's going so fast. Where they give you time before the show and they give you time in between to take pictures of the girls. Have you been there?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes].

LR: You have?

IH: Mm hmm [Yes]. It's a nice show.

LR: It was originated by my aunt Mrs. Louise Akeo Silva, my mother's younger sister. I told you, I think. Now, I have a cousin that's doing the emceeing. That's Brown, May Brown. And then, there's couple other girls that do it. Some of the old-timers have just left. But I think they've kept it rather on the same format that she had before, a little bit of this and that.

IH: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

LR: No, I don't think so. You think you missed something?

IH: I don't think so.

(Laughter)

IH: Okay. Thank you.

LR: All right. (You're very welcome! I have enjoyed my visits with you!)

END OF INTERVIEW

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